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ABSTRACT

Given the explosion in the use of instructional television, it is especially important that it be used appropriately in international and multicultural classrooms. In 1990, a team of researchers at Northern Illinois University (De Kalb) began to compile findings from a study of the most critical audience factors with impacts on the design and delivery of instruction for international learners in higher education in the United States. These findings will be incorporated into bulletins, titled "Culturefax," that will be distributed to interested parties to highlight areas of concern. Pilot Culturefax bulletins have been produced relating to the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. Interactive programs are being developed to accompany future Culturefax bulletins. Several basic rules are presented for the integration of television into instruction (i.e., selecting the programming carefully, excerpting the most useful parts, planning the use of the video, and preparing the audience for the experience). It is also necessary to follow up the video experience and to evaluate its use. Guidelines are presented for a viewing group activity that will allow participants to discuss the use of the medium. Educators must assume leadership roles in the use of instructional television. (SLD)

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Preparing Teachers for Using Instructional Television in Diverse Cultural Settings

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by
David G. Gueulette

Many recent and exciting developments in the production and delivery of instructional television have encouraged teacher education programs worldwide to incorporate video activities in their pre-service and in-service courses. Video in all its many forms but especially in videocassette format has emerged as a major means of delivery of instruction after the use of lecture and overhead transparencies. Given this explosion in the use of the medium, it is essential that it be employed correctly and effectively. It is especially important to use television appropriately in international and multicultural classrooms.

Very probably we will be using more and more video for multicultural instruction, thus we must demonstrate how to use it judiciously and correctly. Additionally, we must not forget to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the medium and the role that it plays in educating and shaping the values of all societies and cultures.

In the Spring of 1990, a team of researchers at Northern Illinois University began to compile findings from a study investigating the most critical audience factors impacting the design and delivery of instruction for international learners in higher education settings in the United States. Results of early findings provided a direction for additional inquiry that is still continuing on the problems and challenges that face both learners from other cultures and their U.S. instructors in university environments.

Findings are being incorporated in bulletins called "Culturefax" that will be distributed to higher education institutions and other interested parties. These bulletins note special cultural factors that may prompt instructors to become more sensitive and more effective in their multicultural classrooms. These bulletins highlight, for example, whether a certain nationality is generally more comfortable in group or team learning activities or in more individualized programs, or how these international learners respond to mediated instruction.

Other findings that have been useful in developing the highlights have been: the presentation style and dress of the instructor, mediated materials preferences, personal treatment of the learners, use of glossaries to supplement existing texts for learners with language handicaps, timing and pace of instruction, and a dozen other factors.

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Culturefax bulletins capture the research and offer examples of the multicultural instructional practices that deal with such topics as:

1. Platform skills in the multicultural education setting
2. Selection of appropriate media (especially television)
3. Pacing and timing of instruction
4. Treatment of learners
5. Special cultural factors or religious, political, or social considerations
6. Instruction in English factors
7. Subject matter issues
8. Classroom environments.

Key theoretical constructs that generated the research were suggested by the work of Philip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran (1987) who posited several categories of cultural conditions that can impact learning by adult internationals in classrooms. These became the general areas of inquiry that the study attempted to address.

The conditions are as follows:

SENSE OF SELF AND SPACE

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

DRESS AND APPEARANCE

FOOD AND EATING

TIME

RELATIONSHIPS

VALUES AND NORMS

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

MENTAL PROCESS AND LEARNING

WORK HABITS

The cultural impact on learning could be further refined to cover these educational sub-heads:

TEACHER PERCEPTION

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

CLASSROOM ATTITUDES OR BEHAVIOR

PERSONAL VALUES

OTHER

These categories and subheads were analyzed and formed into statements that could by tested for specific cultural groups. The initial intent was to clarify these statements to generate responses that could be developed into hypotheses. The final outcomes would not be facts, findings or generalizations but rather testable statements derived from the collection of answers.

This approach was also recommended in a dissertation by Dr. Jeanne Hites (1990). She suggested the development of testable statements for A.T. & T. instructors who were involved in the teaching of technical switching systems. She also employed a process termed: "triangulation" to confirm that the statements from international respondents were as valid as possible.

So, using "triangulation" that included student comments, previous instructors' comments and any written or anecdotal data available, Hites generated hypotheses that could be tested by in-service instructors at A.T.&T. This puts research on international teaching/learning at the appropriate and most relevant level: the classroom. It also provides the investigator with very reliable and valuable hypotheses that can be tested and possibly lead to improved classroom instruction and learning. It also attempts to avoid the so-called, "Margaret Mead" error of generalizing too extensively from respondents without other types of corroborating evidence.

This same "triangulation" method using students as respondents, instructors as informants and written or anecdotal information in support of each statement or hypothesis was utilized in the this study. As mentioned earlier, the statements have been put into bulletins entitled "Culturefax" which will be provided upon request to interested instructors, instructional designers and others.

Currently three cultural/national audiences have been examined and pilot "Culturefax" bulletins produced. These are: Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. Upcoming bulletins will consider learners from Malaysia, People's Republic of China, Kenya, Taiwan, South Africa and Egypt. In addition to the printed bulletins a "LINKWAY", IBM interactive instructional program, is available for the Philippine's version of "Culturefax". Future interactive programs are being developed for several other countries as well.

One of the important findings of the Culturefax process has been that the use of television is an especially critical classroom activity. International respondents indicated that using the medium in the typical U.S. fashion presented some difficulties for students from other countries who saw television as a medium for entertainment only. They typically mentioned that using television was frivolous and lacked the credibility of lecture or other types of classroom exercises.

This information has lead to an investigation of the use of instructional television in the multicultural environment and the development of some guidelines for its use.

As a result of the vigorous applications of the medium for teaching throughout the United States and abroad, two important problems have become quite evident; 1) the overuse of inconsequential video programs and 2) the misuse of video programs. It is not difficult to appreciate why there is such a temptation to use television in its many forms. We have only to consider the array of sources of television programs and equipment now available to the teacher in the multicultural or international classroom.

It is probable that teachers are overusing taped or broadcast video and that they are often not using video in planned and effective ways to support instructional objectives. Reports from learners and teachers alike seem to support these concerns. This is unfortunate, especially given that there are several basic rules for the integration of television into instruction that are easy to understand and that apply and improve the use of the medium markedly.

1) Select good television programming that can be used to support your instructional objectives. Preview all the video you are considering and use only the parts that fit your objectives. Ask yourself the following questions about the video you consider:

a. Is it provocative?

b. Is it of good technical quality?

c. Does it have appropriate content?

d. Will it fit my objectives for the lesson?

e. Does it generate student activities or discussion?

f. Can I, as a teacher, use this video effectively?

2) Excerpt the parts that are most useful. The equipment features on VCR permit easy and effective use of limited sections of programs.

3) Plan how the video selected will be used in the actual lesson or class activity. Determine when and how you will use the video, whether the VCR and television sets will be available, or if you might have problems with using the equipment. Write the video activity into your lesson plan and lay out all activities you plan to do with the television segment of the unit. Remember that the video can be a particularly robust and interactive learning medium.

4) Prepare the audience for the television experience. Tell the viewer what to expect in the segment and provide questions or comments that will assist him of her in assessing the points in the video. Tell the audience what you expect them to get out of the activity. Tell the viewer what to watch or listen for, or what to remember or what to take down in notes. Tell the student what you will do after the viewing of the video.

5) Show the video. Make sure the program runs smoothly, but don't fidget with the equipment. Stop the tape, if you are using a recorder/player and ask questions, make comments or show certain points of special importance. Rewind to review important portions of the tape of fast forward through parts that are not useful to the lesson.

6) Follow-up the video experience. Give a summary of the video or remind the viewers of the planned expectations for the program. Use questions or comments to generate discussion or debate. Have a test on the program or require a written or oral report. Use the program's strengths to meet the objectives of the lesson. It is usually not appropriate to show a television learning activity without follow-up in a class. Perhaps, the only time when this may be advisable is when the program is complete in and of itself with well-defined points, reinforcement cues and built-in testing activities.

7) Evaluate the use of the video to determine whether you want to use it again. If you do choose to use the television activity again, do you need to modify it? For example, do you need to use more or less of the program, do you need to edit something out, or do you need to use better equipment? What better follow-up activities can you use next time? Review your use of the television activity overall to determine how you can use it better another time.

Two things that help a teacher continuously integrate television into lessons are: 1) a television materials evaluation check list or guide; and, 2) a list of useful video applications.

The basic rules are simple and effective. The teacher must play a positive role in the use of television for instruction in multicultural settings. He or she must use it judiciously and correctly-not only with some of the suggestions just mentioned, but also in ways that bring multicultural learners to a more "critical" understanding of the medium as it is used in educational classrooms.

As an example of a powerful and effective use of the medium teachers may want to consider using a "VIEWING GROUP" activity. A "VIEWING GROUP" activity might include the use of when selected video with the aid of 1. a theme or idea to be explored; or, 2. a critical examination of the producer's intent and the effect of the mediation. Group dialogue with the object of confronting and redefining reality could follow the critical viewing of the program. Participants in the group could begin to develop a critical view of the symbols, myths, and technical aspects of the medium and its impact on viewers and learning.

VIEWING GROUP GUIDELINES

1. SELECT RICH PROGRAMMING
2. USE A VARIETY OF SHOW TYPES
3. PROMOTE DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION
4. USE ROLE PLAYING OR VALUE CLARIFICATION ACTIVITIES
5. EXAMINE AND CRITIQUE THE EFFECTS OF THE MEDIUM AND THE INTENTIONS OF THE PRODUCERS
6. PROMOTE CRITICAL VIEWING

TO PROMOTE CRITICAL VIEWING:

A. DEVELOP ROBUST AND PROVOCATIVE THEMES OR IDEAS.

B. DISCUSS OR PLAN ACTION.....ENCOURAGE PRACTICE FROM CRITICISM.

C. CRITICALLY EXAMINE PROGRAMMING AND TOPICS.

D. MODEL CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

The approach is a good way to involve the learners in critical analysis of television and appropriate ways to use it both for delivery of instruction and as a subject of instruction. Teachers must play a positive role in the use of television for interactive learning in multicultural settings.

We must not forget to become and to help our diverse students become active, critical television viewers, viewers who are able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the medium and the role that it plays in educating and shaping the values of our global society.

Additionally, we educators must assume leadership roles in the selection, development and application of culturally appropriate instructional television. We must make sure that mass communication systems, especially television, support a democratic philosophy of education. Finally, we have a responsibility to promote the potentially liberating possibilities of existing and emerging video technologies.

References

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